

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. An intraoral data input tool for use during dental examination of a patient,
2 said tool comprising:
3 a handle; and
4 a head attached to a first end of said handle, said head including
5 a data input device, said data input device being responsive to force applied by
6 a stylus, said head being configured to allow a dental examiner to input data
7 using said stylus on said input device when said head is positioned at least
8 partially within said patient's mouth.

1 2. The intraoral data input tool of claim 1 wherein said head is discoid.

1 3. The intraoral data input tool of claim 2 further comprising an extrusion
2 attached to the perimeter of said discoid head diametrically opposite to said
3 handle, said extrusion extending radially from said discoid head.

1 4. The intraoral data input tool of claim 1 wherein said data input device
2 comprises a multiplicity of push buttons.

1 5. The intraoral data input tool of claim 4 wherein each of said push buttons
2 has a top surface area in the range of 1 to 2 square millimeters.

1 6. The intraoral data input tool of claim 1 wherein said data input device
2 comprises a touch sensitive display.

1 7. The intraoral data input tool of claim 1 wherein said head further includes a
2 mirror.

1 8. The intraoral data input tool of claim 7 wherein said data input device
2 comprises a multiplicity of push buttons located peripherally about said mirror.

1 9. The intraoral data input tool of claim 7 wherein said head is discoid having
2 first and second flat surfaces and wherein said data input device and said
3 mirror are positioned on said first and said second flat surfaces respectively.

1 10. The intraoral data input tool of claim 1 wherein said head further includes a
2 display.

1 11. The intraoral data input tool of claim 1 further comprising a translucent
2 disposable cover.

1 12. The intraoral data input tool of claim 11 further comprising a clamp
2 configured to keep said disposable cover conformal with the surface of said
3 data input device.

1 13. The intraoral data input tool of claim 1 further comprising a wireless
2 communication device contained within said handle, said communication device
3 being electrically connected to said data input device.

1 14. The intraoral data input tool of claim 1 further comprising:
2 an electrical connector attached to a second end of said handle;
3 and
4 an electrical cable connecting said electrical connector to said
5 data input device.

1 15. The intraoral data input tool of claim 1 wherein said stylus is a dental
2 probe.

1 16. A dental data input system comprising:
2 an intraoral data input tool, said tool including a data input device;
3 and
4 a stylus;
5 wherein said data input device is responsive to force applied by
6 said stylus, and said intraoral data input tool is configured to allow a dental
7 examiner to input data using said stylus on said data input device when said
8 input device is positioned at least partially within a patient's mouth.

1 17. A dental data input system as in claim 16 wherein said stylus is a dental
2 probe.

1 18. A dental data input system as in claim 16 further comprising a controller
2 with an operating program, said controller being linked to said intraoral data
3 input tool by a communication means.

1 19. A dental data input system as in claim 18 wherein said communication
2 means comprises an electrical cable.

1 20. A dental data input system as in claim 18 wherein said communication
2 means is a wireless communication means.

1 21. A dental data input system as in claim 18 wherein said operating program
2 includes a routine for periodontal examination.

1 22. A dental data input system as in claim 18 wherein said operating program
2 includes a routine for dental charting.

1 23. A dental data input system as in claim 18 further comprising:
2 a display electrically connected to said controller; and
3 a keyboard electrically connected to said controller.

1 24. A dental data input system as in claim 18 further comprising a voice
2 synthesizer electrically connected to said controller.

1 25. A dental data input system as in claim 18 further comprising an auxiliary
2 input device electrically connected to said controller.

1 26. A method for dental data collection comprising the steps of:
2 conducting a dental examination of a patient; and
3 while conducting said dental examination, inputting examination
4 data on an intraoral data input tool, said tool being positioned at least partially
5 within the mouth of said patient.

1 27. A method for dental data collection as in claim 26 wherein said inputting
2 step comprises using a stylus to activate at least one of a multiplicity of push
3 buttons, said push buttons being included in said intraoral data input tool.

1 28. A method for dental data collection as in claim 26 wherein said inputting
2 step comprises using a stylus to activate a touch sensitive display, said screen
3 being included in said intraoral data input tool.

1 29. A method for dental data collection as in claim 26 wherein said inputting
2 step includes confirming input examination data.

1 30. A method for dental data collection as in claim 29 wherein confirming input
2 examination data comprises listening to a computer synthesized recitation of
3 said input examination data.

1 31. A method for dental data collection as in claim 29 wherein confirming input
2 examination data comprises viewing input examination data on a display, said
3 display being included in said intraoral data input tool.

1 32. A method for dental data collection as in claim 26 further comprising the
2 step of before conducting said dental examination, selecting a dental data
3 collection program on said intraoral data input tool.

1 33. A method for dental data collection as in claim 32 wherein said dental data
2 collection program includes a routine for periodontal data collection.

1 34. A method for dental data collection as in claim 32 wherein said dental data
2 collection program includes a routine for dental charting.

1 35. A method for dental data collection comprising the steps of:
2 a) examining a patient's tooth;
3 b) during said examining step, inputting examination data for said
4 tooth on an intraoral data input tool, said tool being positioned at least partially
5 within the mouth of said patient; and
6 c) repeating steps (a) and (b) for each of said patient's teeth
7 desired to be examined until all desired data is input.

1 36. A method for dental data collection as in claim 35 wherein said inputting
2 step comprises using a stylus to activate at least one of a multiplicity of push
3 buttons, said push buttons being included in said intraoral data input tool.

1 37. A method for dental data collection as in claim 35 wherein said inputting
2 step comprises using a stylus to activate a touch sensitive display, said screen
3 being included in said intraoral data input tool.

1 38. A method for dental data collection as in claim 35 wherein said inputting
2 step includes confirming input examination data for said tooth.

1 39. A method for dental data collection as in claim 38 wherein confirming input
2 examination data comprises listening to a computer synthesized recitation of
3 said input examination data.

1 40. A method for dental data collection as in claim 38 wherein confirming input
2 examination data comprises viewing said input examination data on a display,
3 said display being included in said intraoral data input tool.

1 41. A method for dental data collection as in claim 38 wherein said examining
2 step further includes examining related tissues of said tooth and wherein said
3 inputting step further includes inputting examination data for said related
4 tissues and wherein said repeating step further includes repeating steps (a)
5 and (b) for related tissues of each of said teeth until all desired data is input.